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Report of the Administrator

I. PURPOSE

1. The present report contains a review and update of the key elements of the programming framework of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and describes initiatives the Fund has undertaken in the biennium 1993-1994. Also addressed are UNIFEM preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and future directions for UNIFEM into the twenty-first century.

II. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

2. UNIFEM has developed initiatives in four areas.

(a) Launched programmes in every developing region to help women gain the skills they need to move into positions of decision-making;

(b) Integrated activities in its approach to sustainable human development that support and promote women's human rights and women's environmental concerns;

(c) Underscored the link between assistance to women refugees and longer-term development needs by providing women with transferable skills for rebuilding their communities;

(d) Promoted the women's development agenda within the international community through its publications, videos, special events and media strategies.

3. The Fund continues to work in three main programme areas of strategic importance to women: agriculture; trade and industry; and macro policy and national planning. Initiatives in these areas are supported by technical assistance for credit, technology transfer, small business development, and training. The UNIFEM approach stresses capacity-building, women's empowerment, collaboration with appropriate partners, and region-specific priorities. The Fund also addresses issues on the global agenda that critically affect women as beneficiaries of and contributors to the development process. An example is its increasing support to the women's movement in developing expertise in international trade so that women in the South become active participants in the economic development of their own countries, as well as negotiators in international forums.

4. An important emphasis of the Fund's work is linking women's development initiatives at the grass-roots level with the macro-policy formulation that shapes their future. The comparative advantage of UNIFEM lies in this intersection of macro-policy and micro-action.

A. Africa

5. The UNIFEM focus during 1993-1994 has been to operationalize strategies to promote agriculture and food security, trade and industry and the protection of the environment. Food and income security remain the central goal of the UNIFEM Africa Investment Plan. Capacity-building, access to technology, credit and training and environmental sustainability are the cross-cutting themes of all projects.

6. In the agricultural sector, the Africa programme has operationalized a commodity-based food security strategy, linking agricultural technology with the experience of women working directly in the food production sector. Under trade and industry, the experience of women's roles in informal trade activities are shared with those designing macro policies in these sectors. Particular attention has been given to regional integration and rationalization of national and cross-border markets. The Fund addresses environmental and technological constraints of women in energy-intensive rural industries, and emphasizes gender training for officials in the mining and trade industries. To assist women's businesses to expand or diversify, the Fund supports the development of credit schemes for productive activities of women.

7. Through its "African Women in Crisis Umbrella Programme", established in 1993, the Fund responds to the needs of women refugees and displaced persons. Initiatives include assistance for the rehabilitation of women refugees and income-generating work. To promote the linkage between humanitarian assistance and development, the Fund placed a UNIFEM Special Adviser in the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) to integrate gender concerns into the Department's policy and programmes.

B. Asia and the Pacific

8. The primary objective of the Asia and Pacific Development Strategy is to develop and strengthen institutional mechanisms that will link women to formal decision-making structures that closely affect their lives and livelihoods. The Strategy facilitates more gender-responsive development planning, brokers relations between different sectors of society, and legitimizes the voice of women towards ensuring that development is sustainable. Within this context, UNIFEM gives particular attention to women's participation in the political decision-making process. One of the most significant interventions by UNIFEM in this region was to support Cambodian women to strengthen their voice in the formation of the new government after decades of war and destruction.

9. The main focus of the programme in the agricultural sector has been to explore ways to implement Agenda 21 and the non-governmental organization (NGO) alternative treaties as they apply to women and agriculture. Follow-up consultations to the UNIFEM-sponsored Peasant Women's Summits, held prior to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), were convened in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal, and resulted in the formulation of country-specific plans of action and in final recommendations to the relevant government ministries and organizations.

10. The Asia/Pacific Section Strategy on trade and industry has identified several types of activities to help create a positive environment for women manufacturing workers and entrepreneurs. UNIFEM, in collaboration with the United Nations University Institute for New Technologies, has conducted impact studies of new technologies on women's industrial work. UNIFEM also supported the strengthening of the gender-responsiveness of governmental statistical systems in the Asia/Pacific region.

C. Latin America and the Caribbean

11. In collaboration with appropriate partners, the programme in Latin America and the Caribbean addresses environmental management and education, citizenship development and democratization; the institutional capacity-building of women's organizations; advocacy and support of initiatives focusing on the theme of violence; and poverty alleviation.

12. UNIFEM has focused on the immediate well-being of the most vulnerable groups and has worked at the same time to ensure that macro-level agricultural policies take into account the roles women play and the obstacles they face as producers and consumers in the rural economy. Two key elements in the UNIFEM strategy for enhancing the socio-economic development of women in the region are improving women's access to credit and structuring programmes that enhance women's ability to manage their own funds. In addition to region-wide credit programmes, UNIFEM is also supporting the management and gender training of micro-enterprise groups. In the Caribbean, UNIFEM is encouraging policy analyses of issues related to women and micro-enterprise development. In connection with the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), UNIFEM is supporting simultaneous policy analyses of the potential impact such a macro-level economic arrangement would have on women in each country.

13. UNIFEM has an integrated strategy throughout the region for leveraging the impact of its modest funds by collaborating with other agencies in the United Nations system, as well as with multilateral funders and leading women's organizations. The promotion of networking within the women's movement is another of the region's initiatives. Advocacy by and for women against violence is another focus of some of the most dynamic UNIFEM work.

D. Global initiatives

14. Consistent with the Fund's overall programming objectives in 1993, UNIFEM has undertaken numerous initiatives to strengthen and consolidate its programmes relating to women, environment and development, women's rights as human rights, and women's changing roles in strategic areas such as political decision-making, science and technology and finance.

15. Recognizing that United Nations world conferences present opportunities for the international community to advance gender concerns in all aspects of economic, social and political life, UNIFEM has supported efforts to integrate gender aspects into the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, the World Conference on Small Island Developing States, and the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, by providing women with the skills and information they need to participate more effectively in international forums. UNIFEM conducted workshops on putting gender on the agenda of United Nations conferences in Seoul, Beijing and Dakar. As a follow-up initiative, the Fund and the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service have co-produced a handbook that provides guidance on how NGOs can participate in United Nations world conferences and in international decision-making. UNIFEM has been undertaking similar efforts in preparation for the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. As part of its overall outreach and advocacy efforts, UNIFEM has sought to strengthen relationships with parliamentary groups and with women parliamentarians world wide, whose critical intervention has raised government interest in, and support for, women's issues and the work of UNIFEM.

16. UNIFEM has continued to integrate women, environment and development concerns into its core programming. Each region is undertaking projects which support women and sustainable development and is capitalizing on these experiences to influence policy change that is supportive of women's efforts. The Fund has also contributed to gender and environmental awareness through its publications "Agenda 21: An Easy Reference to Specific Recommendations on Women" and the "UNIFEM Gender, Environment and Development Guide".

17. In its approach to ensuring sustainable human development, UNIFEM has for the past two and a half years increasingly integrated activities that support and promote women's rights as human rights. UNIFEM's current "Women's Human Rights Programme" continues to promote the principle that the protection of women's human rights is fundamental to ensuring women's self-realization and full participation in the democratization and development of their societies.

18. Since 1992, UNIFEM has been involved in the formation of an informal consortium of organizations that has developed a series of collaborative

activities to promote and recognize women's roles in science and technology throughout the preparatory process towards the Fourth World Conference on Women. The consortium will hold a "Once and a Future Pavilion" at the NGO Forum '95, illustrating women's contributions to sustainable development through their application of science and technology. UNIFEM also initiated an "International Coalition on Women and Credit" in 1993. The Coalition has mobilized around the Fourth World Conference on Women and the preparatory regional conferences to raise awareness about the issues of credit on women's micro-enterprises and to conduct impact studies of micro-lending institutions.

19. International trade is becoming an area of strategic importance for UNIFEM owing to its direct impact on the standard of living and availability of resources for women in developing countries. The underlying objective of the increasing involvement of UNIFEM in this global, multisectoral field is first and foremost to assist the women's movement to develop expertise in international trade so that women in the South become players in trade in their own countries, as well as negotiators in the forums where international agreements are reached.

E. Fourth World Conference on Women

20. As part of its overall strategy towards the Fourth World Conference on Women, in September 1993 UNIFEM launched the "Umbrella Programme To Support UNIFEM's Initiatives Towards The Fourth World Conference on Women". Through the programme, UNIFEM has operationalized more than 90 global, regional, and nationally based initiatives in collaboration with other development partners, including the Division for the Advancement of Women. In 1993-1994, UNIFEM initiatives have focused on supporting national and regional preparations for the Conference. The Fund has particularly assisted women's NGOs and networks to strategize and participate at all levels of the preparatory process for the Conference. UNIFEM was also a strong participant in and initiator of key meetings and activities at the national level and at the regional preparatory conferences. The Fund has also developed an outreach to the media and funded NGO publications to provide information on the preparation process for the Conference.

21. UNIFEM has placed a Special Adviser on the Fourth World Conference on Women in the UNDP country office in Beijing to ensure that the main objectives of the UNIFEM strategy for the Conference are addressed. This office will work closely with UNDP, the Government of China, the Division of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Organizing Committee of the NGO Forum, and other United Nations agencies and donors, thus contributing to effective coordination within the United Nations system.

III. OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY

22. UNIFEM has developed a comprehensive communications and information plan in conjunction with the UNIFEM strategy towards the Fourth World Conference on Women. The plan emphasizes improved coordination of publications, posters, videos, special events and media coverage in relation to major United Nations conferences, a series of publications targeted to the World Conference on Women, the channelling of conference-related information to women's grass-roots organizations, and the streamlining of the UNIFEM distribution systems. Under its general publishing programme, UNIFEM has produced books, papers, and technical guidelines based on lessons learned from its 20 years of experience in areas such as human rights, credit and financing, international trade, and mainstreaming.

23. UNIFEM is continuing to expand and benefit from its growing network of National Committees. By the end of 1994, Canada, Ireland, Switzerland/Liechtenstein and the United Kingdom had launched new committees, increasing the official number to 17. At the Sixth Global Meeting of UNIFEM National Committees held in Manila in December 1994, participants elaborated on preparations for the NGO Forum to be held parallel to the World Conference on Women in Beijing. National Committees have also been engaged in a series of special events to promote UNIFEM. During this reporting period, there has been ongoing collaboration with major international women's organizations, such as Zonta International and Soroptimist International, through information-sharing and their funding support to UNIFEM projects. UNIFEM will seek to strengthen this collaboration in 1995.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

24. Following the departure of the former UNIFEM Director in March 1994, a transitional management team of senior UNIFEM staff assisted the Deputy Director to oversee the Fund. Organizational changes undertaken since the appointment of the new Director in October 1994 include the establishment of the Funding and External Relations Section, the creation of a Communications Unit and the expansion of the Technical Advisory Section to encompass the "UNIFEM Human Rights Programme" and "Women and Trade Sector". In 1993-1994, UNIFEM strengthened its operations in Lagos, Nigeria, and in Amman, Jordan. The Fund also placed a programme adviser in Nairobi, Kenya, to direct the UNIFEM Umbrella Programme "African Women in Crisis".

25. UNIFEM has put in place a decentralization and devolution process to shorten the approval process and to lead to improvements in UNIFEM responsiveness to its partners and constituency. In this connection, the Management Service Section installed a field version of the Budget Management System in the Fund's subregional offices to provide for more effective financial management. In addition, on-site training sessions were conducted at the subregional offices. As part of the devolution process, all Regional Programme Advisers now have authority to manage small-project funds directly.

V. FUTURE DIRECTIONS: A WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

26. Through its strong, historical ties to the international women's movement, UNIFEM aims to be a vehicle of change for the concerns and hopes of women, out of which is emerging a women's development agenda for the twenty-first century. This agenda addresses critical issues pertaining to women's livelihood and empowerment in developing countries. They include:

(a) Economic restructuring that empowers women;

(b) Creating sustainable livelihoods;

(c) Building stable lives and healthy communities;

(d) Peace-building and conflict resolution;

(e) Ethical governance and respect for civil society.

27. A major goal for UNIFEM in 1995, therefore, is to maintain its proactive role in ensuring that the women's development agenda is strongly articulated at the World Summit for Social Development and at the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Fund will seek to do this by strengthening its partnerships, by building its intellectual leadership capacity, and by becoming a valuable resource for lessons learned.

VI. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

28. The Executive Board may wish to:

Encourage the United Nations Development Fund for Women to continue its role as a lead organization for the empowerment of women, particularly in implementing recommendations affecting women that have resulted from the United Nations Conference on the Environment, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit on Social Development and in operationalizing the platform for action that is expected to result from the Fourth World Conference on Women;

Call for the strengthening of the United Nations Development Fund for Women to undertake effective strategic interventions to assist and collaborate with a range of partners in providing technical and financial capacity to incorporate the women's dimension into development at all levels;

Further call for a substantial increase in contributions from all Member States to the resource base of the United Nations Development Fund for Women.